

Chapter II

THE IDEA BECOMES A REALITY

The Washington National Monument Society

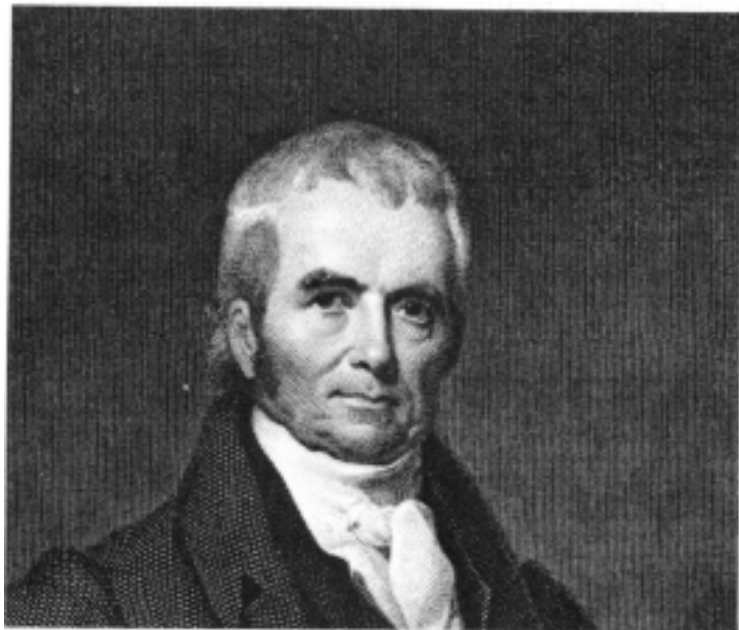
It became apparent that if left to congressional action, a monument to honor Washington would never materialize. Congress was widely criticized for not acting. The prestigious *National Intelligencer*, the leading newspaper in Washington, denounced Congress and the American people for their apathy.¹ Apparently, if any action was to be taken, it would have to be by the private sector. The *National Intelligencer* called for a public meeting of the citizens of Washington to consider the matter and redeem the pledges of Congress. The appeal gained the support of many leading citizens. One such person, George Watterston, a free-lance writer, city alderman, and former Librarian of Congress, concluded that only a direct public appeal would gain the needed results. Watterston became the spirit behind a growing movement to make the long-awaited monument to Washington a reality.²

George Watterston.
Library of Congress.



Prompted by Watterston and others, a public meeting convened in the aldermen's chamber of the City Hall on 26 September 1833. The large number of citizens who attended showed considerable interest and earnestness. After reviewing the congressional failure to fulfill promises over the past 30 years, the group concluded that it could not expect that body to be more successful in the future. The group therefore organized the Washington National Monument Society, consisting of citizens largely from the Washington area. Their object was to erect a monument to Washington's memory through voluntary contributions from the general public. The newly formed organization quickly appointed committees to draft a constitution and by-laws, devise a practical plan for raising funds, and prepare an address to the nation.³

At its second meeting on October 31, the Society adopted a constitution and by-laws and elected officers. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall, who had offered the 1799 resolution in the House of Representatives, became president of the Society. Other elected officers were Judge William Cranch, first vice-president; John P. Van Ness (mayor of Washington), second vice-president; William W. Seaton, third vice-president; Samuel H. Smith, treasurer; and George Watterston, secretary. The Society also elected a 13-member board of managers, one of whom was the historian Peter Force. Meanwhile, the organization established its headquarters and offices in basement rooms of City Hall, where it remained until 1878.⁴



John Marshall.
Library of Congress.

When Marshall died in 1835, 85-year-old former President James Madison succeeded him as president of the Society, although he realized that his role would be honorary. In 1839 the Society amended its constitution to make the President of the United States its *ex officio* president. The first to hold this position was President Andrew Jackson.⁵

The organization carefully selected competent agents to collect funds throughout the United States. In nearly every instance senators, representatives, or other political leaders of a state or territory nominated the agents for appointment by the Society. After appointment, the Society bonded the agents and required them to maintain accurate records of their funds and report at frequent intervals. When the agents forwarded the funds to Washington, the Society's treasurer placed the money in banks. The agents received a commission of 10 percent, later increased to 15 percent, for their services. Of the large number of agents, only two failed to account for the money they collected up to 1855. The Society publicized the fund-raising campaign through the press and the pulpit.⁶

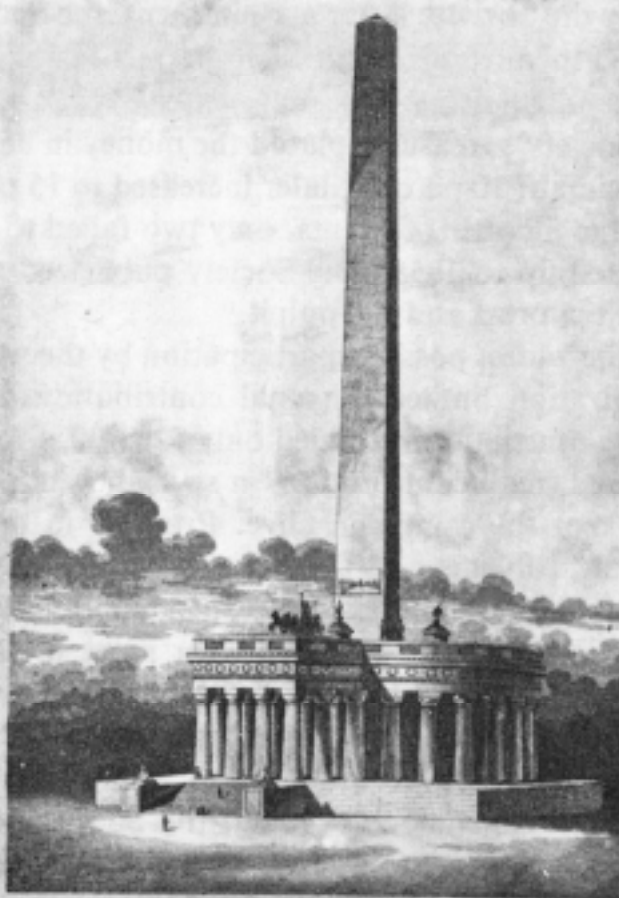
To permit the widest possible participation by the public in the fund raising, the organization limited personal contributions to \$1 per year. Within three years, contributions totaled only \$20,000. From time to time, various groups raised small contributions at special events, but, in general, the \$1 donations kept the campaign alive. Progress in raising funds was slow. The financial problems and the depressed state of the economy in 1837 affected fund raising. The agents suspended collections for several years, despite the Society's urgent appeals for more money. In 1845 the Society wisely removed the \$1 limit on contributions, and, for a while, subscriptions increased. The amount raised grew to \$62,450, but the Society still had a long way to go.⁷

In addition to removing the ceiling, the Society resorted to other fund-raising devices from time to time. It appealed to school children and women's organizations for money, put contribution boxes in post offices, and asked census takers to hand out subscription blanks. After 1836, each contributor received a souvenir lithograph of the winning design. In the form of certificates, these lithographs bore the autographs of such prominent individuals as Zachary Taylor, James K. Polk, George M. Dallas, Henry Clay, Millard Fillmore, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and Albert Gallatin. For those contributors who preferred other lithographs, the Society also printed certificates with portraits of Washington. In spite of these efforts, the Society garnered only \$87,000 by 1847, a relatively small amount for a 12-year campaign.⁸

Because of its lack of success, the Society inevitably became the object of criticism. Ironically, Congress was one of the Society's principal critics. To allay any possible fears of mismanagement or misuse of funds, the Society decided to place all of its business before the people in a statement to the nation, but the censuring, however unjustified, did not cease.⁹

The Robert Mills Design

To spur enthusiasm and encourage contributions, the Society decided that it must convince the public that the monument eventually



THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT, IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON.

Base of the Obelisk, 220 feet diameter. Height, 555 feet. Height of Obelisk, 500 feet.

The loftiest monument on earth is a noblest & greatest benefactor. The tribute of a GRATEFUL PEOPLE to "THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY."

Earnestly recommended to the donors of our Country men
Franklin Pierce John Quincy Adams J. Taylor
James O. Smith Albert Gallatin Millard Fillmore
G. M. Dabney H. Clay Dan Webster

Helper to the erection of this Monument

contributed

Agent.

Souvenir lithograph given to contributors. National Archives (Record Group 42).



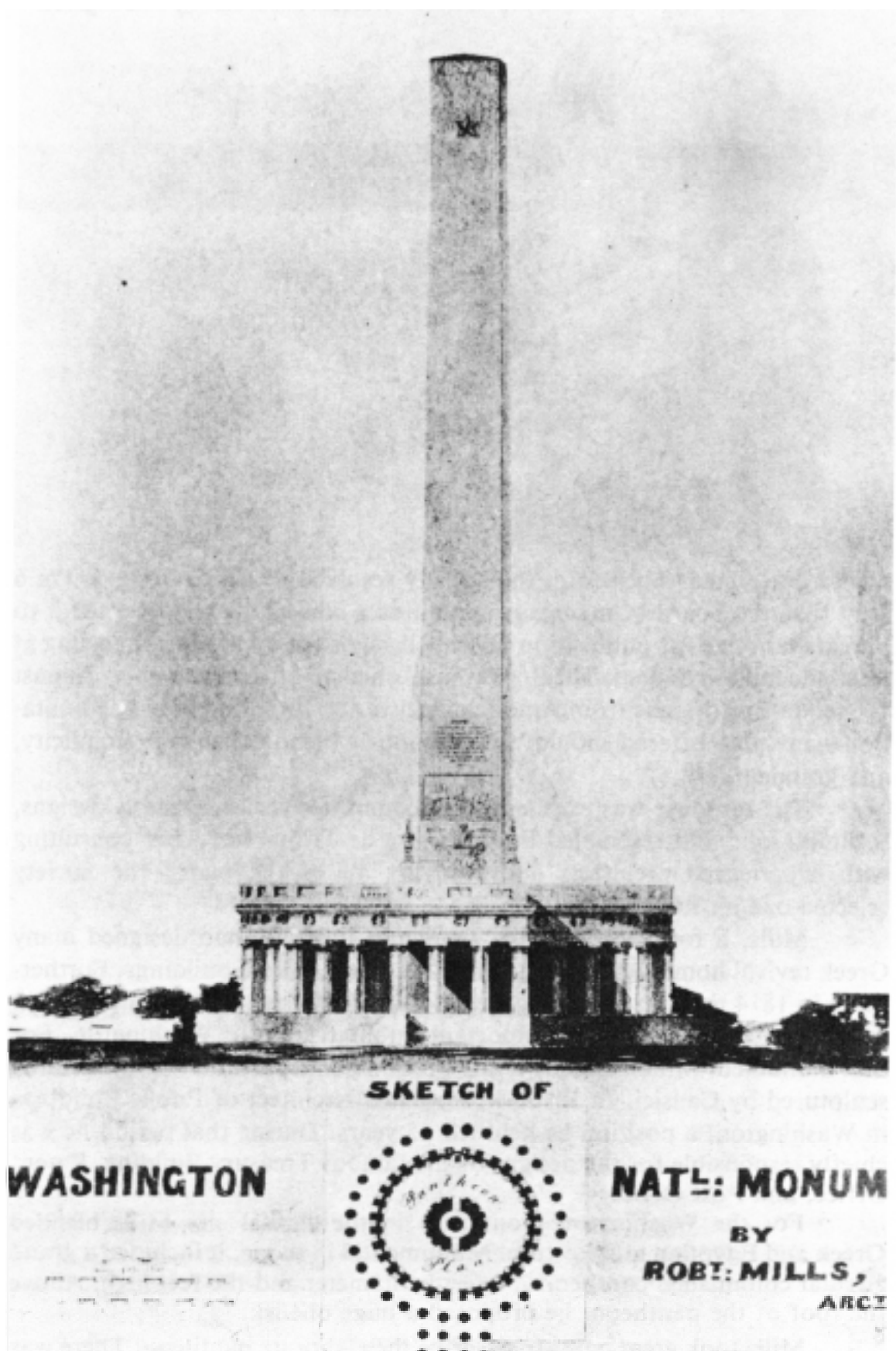
would be erected. Therefore, the Society resolved to solicit designs. On 6 July 1836 the board of managers appointed a committee and directed it to prepare a notice for publication inviting designs for a monument costing at least one million dollars. The Society published an advertisement on August 10, requesting designs from American artists and imposing only one limitation—any plan offered should “harmoniously blend durability, simplicity, and grandeur.”¹⁰

The response was excellent. The committee reviewed many designs, including one that resembled France’s Arc de Triomphe. After consulting with experienced architects and studying all of the plans, the Society selected one by Robert Mills.

Mills, a former student of Benjamin Latrobe, had designed many Greek revival homes, customs houses, and other federal buildings. Furthermore in 1814 the citizens of Baltimore had selected his design for a monument in their city—the first important public tribute to Washington. For that monument Mills designed a tall Greek column surmounted by a statue sculptured by Causici. In 1836 Mills became Architect of Public Buildings in Washington, a position he held for 15 years. During that period he was chiefly responsible for the designs of the famous Treasury Building, Patent Office, and Post Office.¹¹

For the Washington monument in the capital city Mills blended Greek and Egyptian architecture. Monumental in scope, it included a grand circular colonnaded pantheon 250 feet in diameter and 100 feet high. Above the roof of the pantheon, he proposed a huge obelisk.

Mills took great pains to describe the elaborate pantheon. There was no doubt that he intended to give this part of his design considerable emphasis. Meanwhile, he described the much simpler obelisk in these terms:



The Mills design. Library of Congress (photograph USZ62-21953).

In the centre of the grand terrace, above described, rises the lofty obelisk shaft of the monument, 70 feet square at the base, and 500 feet high, diminishing as it rises to its apex, where it is forty feet square; at the foot of this shaft, and on each face, project four massive zocles, 25 feet high, supporting so many colossal symbolic tripods of victory, 20 feet high, surmounted by facial columns with their symbols of authority. These zocle faces are embellished with inscriptions, which are continued around the entire base of the shaft, and occupy the surface of that part of the shaft between the tripods. On each face of the shaft above this is sculptured the four leading events in General Washington's eventful career, *in basso relievo*, and above this the shaft is perfectly plain to within 50 feet of its summit, where a simple star is placed, emblematic of the glory which the name of Washington has attained.¹²

To reach the top of the column, Mills planned an easy-graded gallery within the shaft which could "be traversed by a railway, terminating in a circular observatory, 20 feet in diameter, around which at the top is a look-out gallery, which opens a prospect all around the horizon."¹³

Surrounded by 30 columns of massive proportions, the rotunda formed the base of the monument. A 20-foot-high entablature, or upper wall, crowned by a 15-foot-high balustrade, surmounted the rotunda. Mills estimated the cost of the obelisk alone at \$552,000, and of the entire monument at \$1,222,000.¹⁴

Mills' design was consistent with the classical tastes of the period. As early as 1813 he had described his philosophy concerning structures of this nature. He believed that solidity, simplicity, and a degree of cheerfulness should characterize all monuments, which should not permit the mind to turn away in "gloom or disgust." A monument, he noted, should "perpetuate the virtues of the deceased" and emanate an "air of cheerful gravity."¹⁵

Although his design basically followed his philosophy and, in general, conformed to the conditions in the Society's advertisement, simplicity was not one of its major attributes. While the Society favored Mills' plan, professional and artistic circles did not fully accept it. For many years it was the object of scorn, which delayed its implementation. Early critics called it an "ill-assorted blend of Greek, Babylonian, and Egyptian architecture."¹⁶

No less important an architect and critic than Henry van Brunt claimed that America lacked a sense of education in the arts, a standard of excellence, and professionals qualified to criticize it. Writing in 1880, just before construction of the unfinished monument resumed, van Brunt stated that "no person interested in our reputation as a civilized people can contemplate this completion without pain."¹⁷

Criticisms of Mills' design continued well into the 20th century. Talbot Hamlin, a student of Greek revival architecture, said that if the

original design, which added a tremendous Greek Doric oval pantheon to the simple obelisk, had become a reality, it would undoubtedly "have damaged its absolute and unified perfection."¹⁸

Doubts and criticisms of the original plan were so widespread and persistent that they ultimately reached Congress and the Society. Some of the objections raised within the Society, however, were due more to the cost than the design. After all, the Society had only raised \$31,000 by the end of 1838, far less than the estimated \$1 million or more necessary to construct the monument. That same year, George Watterston issued a general statement to the effect that "We have not abandoned the hope that a plan, which at its inception, was hailed with unequivocal approbation, may yet, with proper modification be effected."¹⁹ Apparently Watterston was hinting that even the Society was having second thoughts about Mills' original design.

While Watterston's statement that the Society would not abandon the design was reassuring, several years elapsed before the organization finally made up its mind. In the meantime, one architectural firm that had submitted a design in 1836 noted that although four years had elapsed, they had not received notification of a final decision. Moreover, given the current rate of subscriptions coming in, it would be 50 years before the Society would have enough money. By then, the firm stated, new architectural tastes would render the 1836 designs obsolete.²⁰ Fortunately, the Society did not have to wait that long.

Meanwhile, the Society received other criticisms and opinions. In 1844 the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds entered the controversy, complicating matters even further. In recommending to Congress a site for the monument, the committee concluded that a "temple form" was the best design. The Society would have to build the monument "upon such a scale as to be capable of containing the busts and statues of the Presidents of the United States, and other illustrious men of our country, as well as paintings of all the historical subjects which have or may be designed by our artists through ages yet to come." The committee proposed that the monument be 150 feet high surmounted by a statue of Washington on its dome. On 25 May 1844, the House of Representatives introduced a joint resolution that contained in substance the committee's recommendations. Because Congress would have to pass legislation granting a site for the monument, the Society reluctantly but wisely opposed this design. Congress failed to act on the resolution, and the final question of design as well as the site remained undecided.²¹

A sense of realism and practicality rather than any serious questions about the adequacy of the design led the Society to doubt the Mills proposal. Many felt that with the paucity of funds and the improbability of extensive future contributions, the Society could not build the entire monument that Mills conceived then or later. In early 1848 a committee began

considering the pros and cons of the many objections to the Mills design. On 11 April 1848 the Society, acting upon the committee's report, decided to build only the obelisk, fixing its dimensions at 500 feet high, 55 feet square at the base, and 35 feet square at the top. It left open the question of a pantheon, terrace, and landscape. Meanwhile, contributions by now totaled \$87,000— enough to begin work.²²

The Society had not abandoned the idea of a pantheon or an equivalent structure at the base of the monument. In fact, the colorful and elaborate certificates offered to contributors as late as 1848 included two lithographs. One was the original Mills design containing both the obelisk and pantheon with the caption "The Mon[ument] Complete With The Pantheon." The second was a view of the obelisk alone with a plain terrace at the base.²³

Construction Begins

The Society's announcement of its plans to begin work on the monument forced Congress to decide on a site. Suspicious of the whole project, Congress hesitated to donate a site. The Society chided it for inaction.

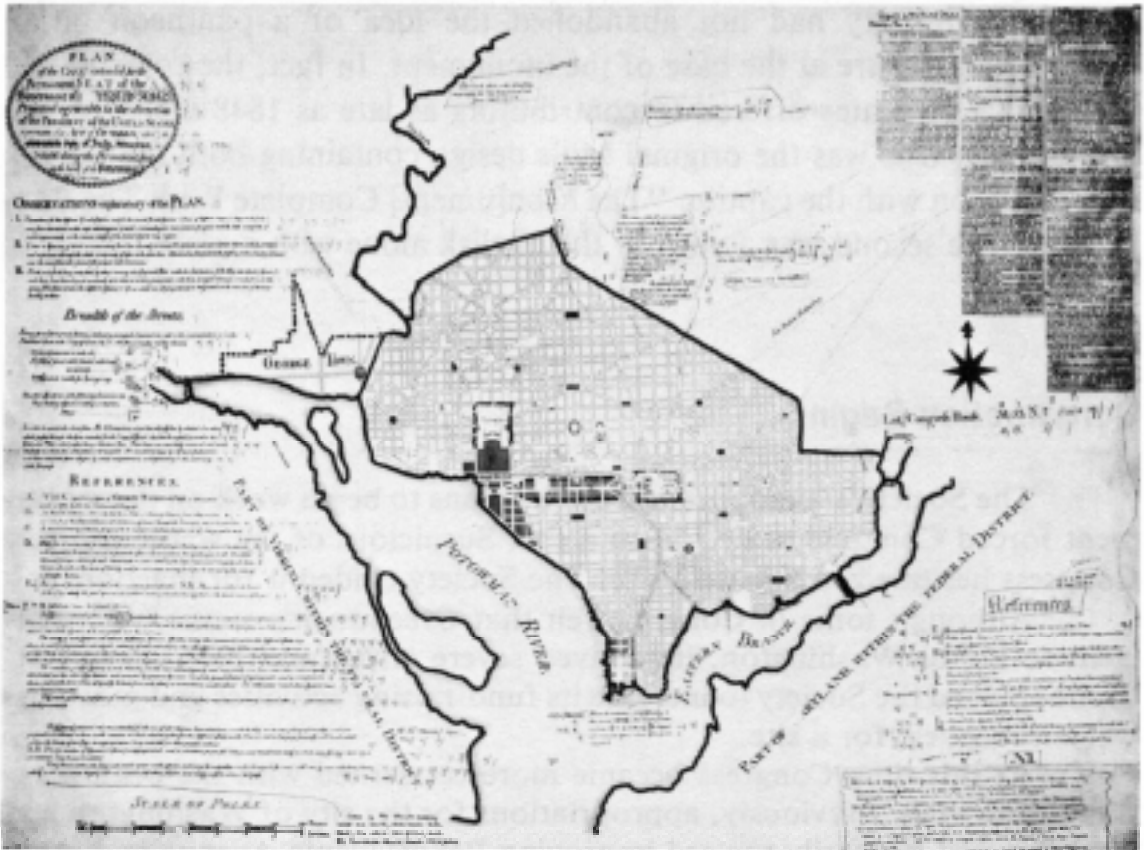
Although some in Congress felt that Greenough's statue was sufficient to honor Washington, it received severe criticisms. This adverse attitude spurred the Society to increase its fund-raising activities and push forward its request for a site.

At this time Congress became more concerned with the beautification of the Mall. Previously, appropriations for the city of Washington had been directed primarily toward improving Pennsylvania Avenue and other important areas. The Society, which historically had always favored a site on the Mall, felt that now was the proper time to force the issue and threatened to purchase a site on privately-owned property.²⁴

Unwilling to see this happen, Congress acted. Besides, the monument on the Mall seemed to be a good idea. On 31 January 1848 Congress passed a joint resolution that authorized the Society to erect a monument "upon such portion of the public grounds or reservations within the city of Washington, not otherwise occupied, as shall be selected by the President of the United States and the Board of Managers of the Society."²⁵

The Society selected a site at public reservation number three on the city's plan. The site contained about 30 acres near the Potomac River, directly west of the Capitol and south of the White House. L'Enfant had chosen almost the exact site for a statue of Washington 56 years earlier. L'Enfant's site had been at the intersection of the city's east-west and north-south axes (the intersection of the White House and Capitol axes). Unquestionably a dramatic site for a monument of this nature, isn't use was ruled out by subsurface conditions and swampy and unstable earth. On 12 April 1848

President Polk executed the deed that transferred the land to the Society.²⁶ The site was about 370 feet east of the White House axis and 123 feet south of the Capitol axis.²⁷ This deviation from the L'Enfant plan later caused many problems for landscape architects working on beautifying the Mall. The construction of the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials eventually rectified the lack of symmetry produced by the Washington Monument.



L'Enfant's proposed site for a monument to George Washington is located at the circle where the axes of the White House and the Capitol come together. Library of Congress (photograph USZ62-8909).

The monument location remains one of the Society's greatest achievements. In addition to its designation on L'Enfant's plan and the fact that it had President Washington's support, the site possessed a beautiful view of the Potomac and elevated the monument so that it could be seen from all parts of the city and surrounding areas, including Mount Vernon. Also, because it was a public reservation, the government could prohibit the erection of any obstructions. Finally, the site was so close to the river that contractors could easily ship materials-stone, sand, and lime-there at relatively little expense.²⁸

After selecting the site, the Society appointed a building committee to administer contracts, make major appointments, and handle accounts-in short, provide general supervision of construction. Almost immediately, the committee constructed temporary facilities at the site to

shelter the stonecutters and store the stones shipped to the site. The committee also built a watchman's house, lapidarium, latrines, and other wooden facilities. Also, the committee ordered the erection of rigs for lifting stone, both at the wharf and at the monument site.²⁹

To obtain building materials as soon as possible, the committee quickly negotiated contracts for the delivery of gneiss, marble, and blue stone. In 1848 William Early of Washington received a contract to deliver blue stone for the foundation. The blocks were to measure not less than 16 feet long and 7 feet thick. After Early delivered the stone to the wharf adjacent to a road leading up to the site, a rig hoisted it from the scow onto wagons drawn by oxen, which then conveyed it to the site.³⁰

Thomas Symington provided the marble for the superstructure from his quarry near Baltimore. The committee thoroughly tested the strength of the marble before signing a contract and found that it could bear a pressure more than 15 times greater than it would normally sustain in any part of the monument.³¹

When the rough marble arrived, stonecutters dressed and polished it, and stonemasons put it into place. At that time, stone-dressing was changing from a slow and tedious manual process to a mechanical one. Many in the industry believed that machinery was more economical and certainly faster than the manual process. Areas such as New York City, where much marble construction was popular due to the rich Westchester County quarries and the interest in Greek revival architecture, already used machinery. William Dougherty, superintendent of construction, who worked under the guidance of Robert Mills, tried to convince the building committee to use machinery by demonstrating that during 1852 the Society paid \$4,205 to cut and dress the marble manually. To have dressed the same amount of marble by machinery, Dougherty said, would have cost only \$3,310, a considerable savings. No evidence indicates that Dougherty ever convinced the building committee.³²

Soon after Symington began work under his contract, he discovered that the railroad did not have enough cars to transport all of his marble. Delays caused rough stone to accumulate at the quarry. At one point Symington complained that he had to stop quarrying because he had no room to store the marble awaiting transportation. At the monument site the delay kept stonecutters and masons idle.³³

The building committee ran up against expenses that had not been calculated during contract negotiations. The blocks of marble for the cornices of the two large doorways led to unexpected expenses. When quarrymen accidentally split ashler marble, as they frequently did, they made simple adjustments and ultimately used nearly every split block. On the other hand, when quarrymen removed unusually shaped blocks for cornices and architraves, they took extreme pains to prevent a split because that would make the stone unusable. Although not necessarily greater in weight than

the ashler stone, these blocks cost more. Also, a quarryman could quarry and handle 500 tons of ashler stone at less cost than a cornice or architrave block. Although unnegotiated and unmentioned in the contract, this inequity caused Symington to complain. The building committee decided to allow him \$2 per foot for eight blocks of marble that he furnished for the doorways.³⁴

There is little evidence of Mills' employment practices at the monument. Because of his duties as Architect of Public Buildings and his involvement in the construction of the Treasury Building, Patent Office, and Post Office at the time, he very likely left details of hiring employees to Dougherty, the superintendent of construction, with the concurrence of the building committee. Mills did insure that construction conformed to his design and specifications. Dougherty, who received his appointment in June 1848, handled much of the day-to-day supervision at the site, checking materials and overseeing their installation. The building committee appointed David Hepburn, who enjoyed a reputation as a skilled builder, as foreman under Dougherty. Hepburn was largely responsible for directing the construction of the foundation. During the first year of construction, when the Society concentrated on the foundation, a relatively small crew worked on the monument—14 stonemasons, 2 stonecutters, 4 carpenters, and 1 rigger. By December 1849, 57 men worked regularly at the site.³⁵

Wages for the workers in those years reveal the basic differences between supervisory, skilled, and unskilled staff. Hepburn, the foreman, received \$2.50 a day. A mastermason got \$2.00 a day, blacksmiths \$1.75, carpenters \$1.00 to \$2.00, and ordinary laborers \$1.00. By 1851 stonecutters received \$2.25 a day, but laborers still got only \$1.00, an indication of how poorly the unskilled worker fared.³⁶

Excavations for the foundation began in the spring of 1848. In May the board of managers advertised for gneiss stone from the quarries of the Potomac Valley. The gneiss was to be large, durable, not less than 4 feet square, and 9 to 12 inches thick. The stones were to cover 1,600 to 3,600 feet.³⁷ Mills described the foundation for the 500-foot shaft in an 1848 article:

The foundation [is] built with massive stones of the firmest texture, the blue rock of the Potomac Valley, many of the blocks of which weigh from six to eight tons, and which come out of the quarry in square masses, as if cut with the tool, and of varied shapes, so that when laid in the foundation they allow and are made to dovetail into each other, forming thereby a stronger mass of masonry than if the same were squared up as in regular masonry. The mortar used in bedding and binding the stones is composed of hydraulic cement and strong stone lime, with their proper proportion of coarse sharp sand, which will become as hard as the stone it binds in a very few weeks. Every crevice of the stone is filled up with this mortar, and

grouted. The square or footing of this foundation for the obelisk is eighty feet each way, and rising by offsets or steps twenty five feet high, the whole built of solid masonry, upon which the obelisk shaft will be placed.³⁸

Mills and the building committee had a serious responsibility for the safety of the foundation and the obelisk. After the workmen completed the foundation, the committee and Mills invited a group of 12 to 15 architects, engineers, and other experts to make a final inspection of the foundation before construction of the superstructure got underway. According to Thomas Carbery, chairman of the building committee, the entire group expressed the highest confidence in the foundation, noting that "it could not be better."³⁹

Mills, who was present at the inspection, later wrote:

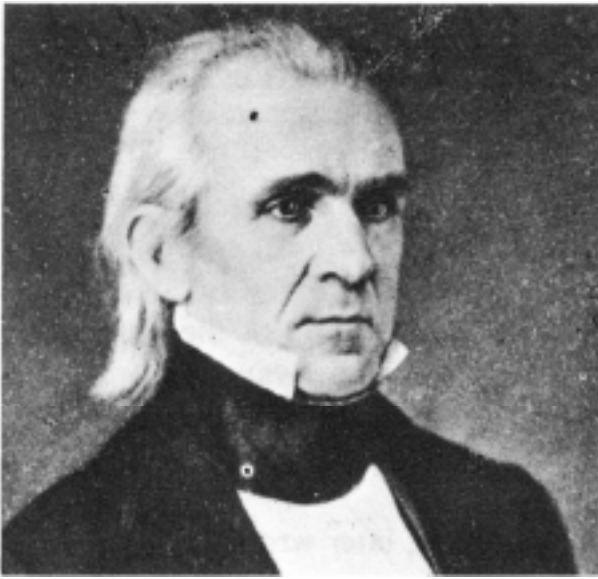
Every precaution was taken to test the understrata where the foundations were laid. A well was dug some little distance, which indicated favorably; the strata was found very compact, requiring a pick to break it up, and at the depth of twenty feet a solid bed of gravel was reached, and six feet lower an abundant supply of the finest water was obtained.

Though the indication were [sic] satisfactory, the architect of the work directed a shaft to be sunk in the centre of the foundation, twenty feet below the bottom of the same, and the same results took place as in the case of the well.

This shaft was also walled up, and has served a good purpose in keeping the foundations dry, and will serve a valuable one hereafter in furnishing a full supply of excellent water as the work goes up; as, by means of a force pump, it could be sent up to the top of the monument, thus supplying a refreshing beverage to the workmen, as well as meeting the demands of the work for water.⁴⁰

With the foundation in place, on 4 July 1848 workmen laid the cornerstone of the shaft amid considerable fanfare. Thomas Symington, the marble contractor, donated the block. Symington took meticulous care in removing the cornerstone from the quarry, transporting it safely and on time to the site, and dressing it. The stone was 6.5 square feet by about 2.5 feet thick and weighed 24,500 pounds. For this occasion, everyone donated his services. The Susquehanna and Baltimore Railroad shipped the stone to Washington free. On its arrival, a large body of workmen from the Washington Navy Yard, assisted by other citizens who volunteered their services, transported the stone to the site. Mathew G. Emery, a stonemason and contractor who later became mayor of Washington, cut and dressed the stone free of charge. He cut a sizeable hole in the stone for a zinc case filled with memorabilia associated with the event.⁴¹

Many dignitaries attended the ceremony. In addition to members of the Society and Mills, the guests included President James Polk; Speaker of the House of Representatives Robert C. Winthrop, who gave the oration;



James K. Polk. *Library of Congress.*

several ranking federal, state, and diplomatic officials; Alexander Hamilton's widow; and Dolley Madison, wife of the fourth President of the United States. The press noted that the ceremonies "surpassed in magnificence and moral grandeur anything of the kind ever witnessed in this metropolis, since the formation of the Republic." The workmen laid the cornerstone at the northeast angle of the foundation.⁴²

Aside from the early problems of transporting the rough marble from the quarries, construction progressed normally. Robert Mills could boast as early as September 1848, not long after the workmen laid the cornerstone, that "the foundations are now brought up nearly to the surface of the ground; the second step being nearly completed, which covers up the corner stone." He added that "about two thousand perches of stone are laid, and it is expected the foundations will be all ready for the stone work before the winter sets in."⁴³

Work on the superstructure must have started nearly on schedule, for by the end of 1852 the shaft reached 126 feet.⁴⁴ In September 1854 Superintendent Dougherty outlined the state of construction in some detail to the chairman of the building committee, advising him to take certain measures to insure progress. Dougherty explained that:

there is now on the ground 835 feet face measurement or about 1500 cubic feet of marble which will make 2 additional courses and leave a balance of 51 feet face measurement which by the 1st of October will be increased to about 150 feet, leaving 240 feet required to make an additional course.. ..

The funds on hand affected construction, and Dougherty's job was to keep the building committee informed not only of progress but also of any additional work that could be accomplished economically. Thus, he felt constrained to give the chairman the following advice:

It would be very desirable could the marble which is now laying on the ground cut be set in the building as it will be liable to in-

jury should it be suffered to remain on the ground...have spoken to the men and told them the probability of the work being stopped on the 1st of October. They agree should the Board permit them to continue to take any portion of their wages (no matter how small) which it may be convenient to pay them and to wait for the balance until funds were collected, so that by an outlay of say \$1000, between the 1st of November and the 1st of December, all the stone now cut could be set in the building, leaving none but the rough marble on the ground which could not be injured....⁴⁵

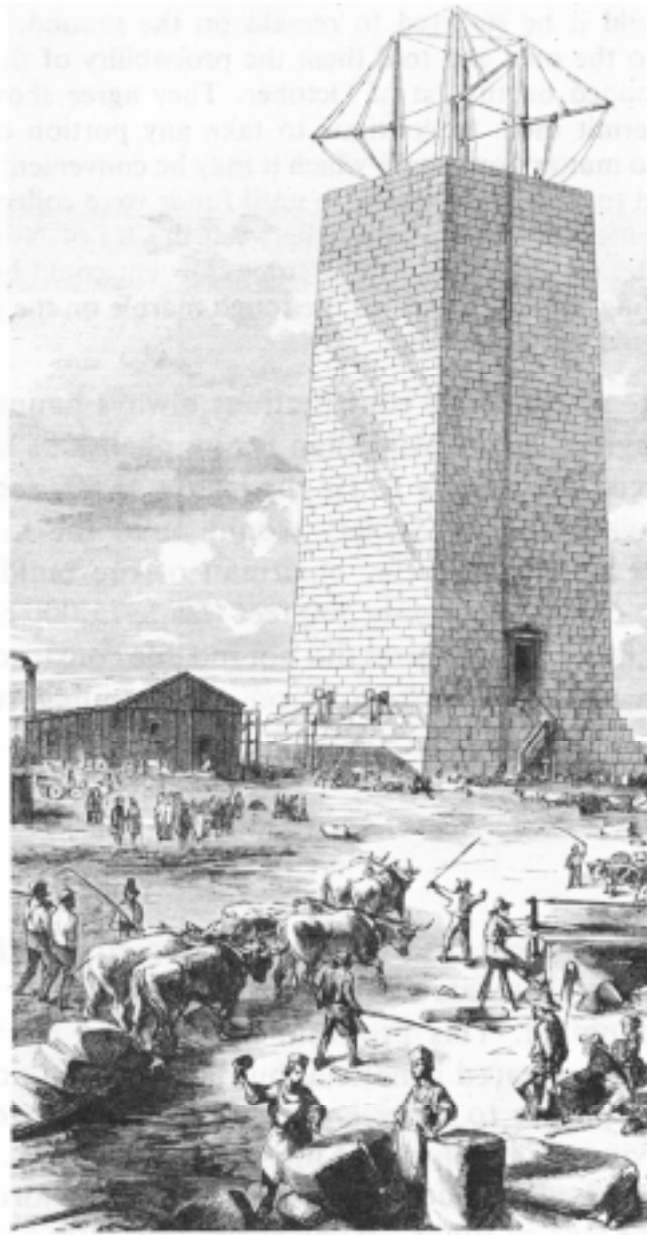
The spectre of declining contributions always haunted the Society. Although it had agreed to the Mills plan for an obelisk as high as 600 feet, limited funds forced the Society to fix the height at 500 feet. If additional money became available, the Society would build the monument to its original proposed height. Carbery, chairman of the building committee, explained that the cost to erect only 500 feet was \$375,000 but the price for 600 feet was \$475,000. These figures did not include construction of the iron stairway and platforms or any work on the grounds surrounding the obelisk.⁴⁶

Memorial Stones

In 1849 some citizens from Alabama proposed to quarry and dress a block of marble from that state and present it to the Society as a gift for the inside of the monument. This proposal induced the Society to adopt a policy that, at first, appeared beneficial but later proved unfortunate. The Society thought it proper to represent all the states and territories at the monument by having them contribute memorial stones that would be fitted into the interior walls. The Society hoped that the memorial stones might compensate for the lack of funds. In any event, the states willingly donated, and blocks of stone—marble, granite, sandstone, and other durable stones—arrived at the site from all parts of the country.

Later the Society permitted Indian tribes, societies, professional organizations, labor unions, businesses, individuals, and even foreign countries to donate memorial stones. The Society limited the size of the stones to 4 feet long, 2 feet high, and 12 to 18 inches thick, and suggested inscriptions, such as the name of the state or donor and, if desired, the coat of arms. However, the instructions were often vague, and donors submitted all sizes and types of lettering and inscriptions. Stones from foreign countries, including China, France, Greece, and England, arrived with inscriptions in their respective languages. In short, uniformity was frequently sacrificed.⁴⁷

Some groups went to extensive pains to raise the money necessary to provide a stone. The American Medical Association, meeting in Richmond, Virginia, in 1852 appointed a committee to issue a circular to all its



The Washington Monument in 1853, as shown in Gleason's *Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*. Library of Congress (photograph USZ62-32301).

members soliciting \$1 donations. Some entrepreneurs were evidently more interested in advertising their product than in paying tribute to their national hero. The Society inserted these stones in the walls along with the rest.⁴⁸

The Society attached considerable importance to the formalities surrounding the acceptance of memorial stones.' Delegations from the various states and foreign governments, and frequently even the President of the United States, were present to dedicate a donated stone.⁴⁹

By 1855 the Society had installed 92 stones in the rising walls of the shaft's interior. Each of the states and two territories had made their contributions. More memorial stones arrived than could be emplaced, so the Society temporarily stored them in the lapidarium.⁵⁰

Contributions Fade and Work Is Halted

By the end of 1854, six years after construction began, the Society had exhausted its funds. Internal dissension within the Society, the serious economic conditions of the times, and the political turmoil that would culminate in the Civil War prevented the Society from raising more money.

By 1854 the Society had spent \$230,000. The board of managers presented a memorial to Congress that described the state of construction and explained that all recent efforts to obtain funds had failed. The Society was asking Congress for help, but it could not have chosen a more inappropriate time. Congress could not do anything to ameliorate the situation, nor was it so inclined, and so the matter rested.⁵¹

By the time work stopped in 1854, the shaft had risen to 152 feet. It measured 55 feet and 1.5 inches on each of its four sides. The shaft tapered upward so that each side at the top measured nearly 49 feet. The center of the obelisk, which formed the well, measured 25 feet and 1 inch on each side. The masonry consisted of a large crystal white marble facing and a blue gneiss stone rubble backing. The marble facing varied from 14 to 18 inches thick in courses of 2 feet rise. The stretchers outran the headers, which were about 6 feet long, with no attempt to obtain a regular bond. The thickness of the walls at the top was almost 12 feet and at the base was about 15 feet. The weight of the partially completed shaft was estimated at about 31,152 tons.⁵²

As conceived in his plan, Mills built two entrances to the monument, one facing east and the other west. Designed with an Egyptian motif, they were 15 feet high and 6 feet wide. A heavy pediment and an entablature displaying a carved winged ball and asp surmounted each doorway. These designs were consistent with the massive pantheon included in the original Mills design for the base of the obelisk.⁵³

The foundation of the shaft was 80 feet square on each side of the bed. This bed was 7.67 feet below the general level of the ground, 23.34 feet thick, and 58.5 feet long on each side at the top. It extended upward in eight steps, resembling a truncated cone. The foundation consisted of bluestone gneiss. Spawls and mortar composed largely of lime and sand filled the interstices between the stones.⁵⁴ With the exception of a very small section added to the walls, the monument remained in this unfinished state for more than two decades, much to the embarrassment of many Americans.